

AFTER THE WAR

VISCOUNT BIRN

1945-1948

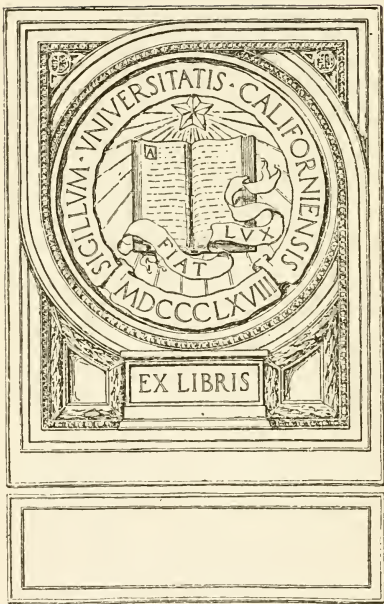
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AFTER THE WAR

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THESE reflections are the outcome of many discussions, during the past two years, with Men at the Front and the Back.

I have ventured to address Mr. Robert Smillie, because, so far as I am able to judge, he represents and leads the most advanced sections of the Labour Party.

AFTER THE WAR

BY VISCOUNT ESHER

G.C.B., G.C.V.O.

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PREFACE

ADDRESSED TO MR. ROBERT SMILLIE

I HAVE not the honour to know you, but here in Scotland they say you are an honest and good man.

History teems with examples of the political affinities of good men and evil actions.

But your aims I assume to be pure. You desire the victory of your country's arms in this righteous war. You desire hereafter to mould judgment and inspire purpose, so as to secure the happiness and well-being of your countrymen. You have enjoyed the experience of intelligent participation in improving the lot of your fellow-workers. You see before you, stretching into immeasurable space, a new prospect for those upon whom the labour of the world has fallen heavily. Your sense of duty impels you to take a lead

in bringing into relation your considered opinion and the law of the land. You desire to adapt political forms to the necessities of the people, as you conceive them. You wish, perhaps in arbitrary fashion, to supply the driving force that is required to bring about political and social change, that you believe to be beneficent.

I have endeavoured, in the following pages, to put into the simplest language and to compress into the smallest compass some reflections upon political mechanics as I understand them. Speculation upon such matters is not immaterial, for you and your fellows will have to express in statutory form your mind and purpose.

I ask you then to urge your followers to reason and explore.

A friend of mine, of over twenty-five years' standing—a follower of yours—a man who has worked with his hands all his life, when we recently discussed these subjects, listened to my plea for old historic influences, and, pointing to an ancient tabard hanging on the wall of the room where we sat, said, "We shall care for them as you care for that, as

a thing of beauty, but obsolete." These were fluid words. They contain no moral thought, for nothing that is old, historic, and beautiful can be obsolete in this symbolistic world.

"There is a sanctity in a good man's home
"which cannot be renewed in every tenement
"that rises on its ruins : and I believe that
"good men would generally feel this ; and
"that having spent their lives happily and
"honourably, they would be grieved at the
"close of them to think that the place of their
"earthly abode which had seen, and seemed
"almost to sympathise in, all their honour,
"their gladness, or their suffering—that this
"with all the record it bare of them, and all
"of material things that they had loved and
"ruled over, and set the stamp of themselves
"upon—was to be swept away, as soon as
"there was room made for them in the grave ;
"that no respect was to be shown to it, no
"affection felt for it, no good to be drawn
"from it by their children ; that though there
"was a monument in the church, there was no
"warm monument in the hearth and house
"to them ; that all that they ever treasured
"was despised, and the places that had

“sheltered and comforted them were dragged
“down to the dust. I say that a good man
“would fear this; and that, far more, a good
“son, a noble descendant, would fear doing
“it in his father’s house.”

If we apply these words to the country of Shakespeare and Scott, they lend force to a patriotism that is noble, unaggressive, and reverent. They have nothing in common with the vulgar aspiration miscalled Imperialism. They are consistent with broad humanitarian sympathy, with yearning towards universal brotherhood, and with the collective effort of men and women of the same race and language.

You can interlace present hope with past endeavour, and intertwine the literature, art, and ancient institutions of our country with drastic changes in her laws. You can merge racial and historic pride in an international combine for the World’s Peace. You can define Progress as “the gradual increasing happiness of the masses, and pursue the aim without dishonouring your forefathers. There is plenty of width in the

world for the individualistic play of mind that loves tradition, that honours memory, that reverences imagination, and the collective initiative and enterprise that mean higher standards of comfort and well-being. To insist upon necessary and inevitable conflict between them is to render disservice to our country.

Your opinions, as I understand them, and mine are not in agreement. I do not share your faith in democracy as a form of government. But we agree in love of our country and fidelity to the men of our race. For their sake, use your influence to bid your friends and associates pause at the threshold of these undetermined issues, and to make sure before sweeping away any institution deeply rooted in historic soil that it is in truth an obstacle.

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AFTER THE WAR

CHAPTER I

THE CROWN

THE temper of Englishmen being neither subversive nor logical, it is a curious fatality that has allied England to a nation that is both. The French are the most logical of peoples and the fondest of revolution. We, on the other hand, make our sparse revolutions according to law and with the utmost regard to tradition. The result has invariably been a masterpiece of inconsequence.

The Great Rebellion, prompted by revolt against autocracy, placed the United Kingdom under the heel of the greatest of autocrats. The Revolution of 1688, originating in the unpopularity of a Stuart king, left England a pawn in the hands of a detested Dutchman.

The Reform Bill of 1832 was a monument of illogical compromise with a "middle class" struggling to obtain a share of the political spoils. Peel and Lord John Russell fought for years over the bauble of political power, while their partisans disputed as though great "principles" were at stake. The influence of the monarchy, fallen into grave disrepute under the later Hanoverian kings, was re-established during the long reign of Queen Victoria, in spite of the republican propaganda of philosophers and theorists.

That grave and experienced statesmen should send their decisions in red boxes to the hereditary representative of a certain family for criticism and approval was not considered incongruous; and that every appointment, naval, military, or civil, should be "submitted" to this strange authority, and defended by elaborate explanations, was not thought anachronistic. The Constitution, though frequently modified, was assumed to be a permanent and unchangeable organism. While democracy was on all men's lips, the love of oligarchy was in

their hearts. The revolutionary families were mocked at by Lord Beaconsfield, but exploited by Mr. Gladstone. Their power was unshaken in spite of the ten-pound householder, and their authority was unimpeded by the middle-class magnates who crowded the scarlet benches of the House of Lords.

When a girl-sovereign refused to accept a powerful Tory leader as her minister, except upon her own terms, she obtained the support of the English people for her pretension. When her youthful husband toned down foreign despatches that had received the approval of cabinets, both powerful ministers and ebullient parliaments yielded with good grace. Never was the influence of hereditary kingship more powerful in England than during the reign of Victoria. Publicists vied with each other in glorifying the hidden power of the Crown. As an antidote to political jobbery, as the fly-wheel of the Constitution, as a check upon the hasty judgment of harassed statesmanship, the Crown was cherished by men of all classes and in every stage of political education.

The voice of criticism was rarely heard and speedily extinguished. A ministerial portfolio was grudgingly assigned to a caviling politician after pledges had been given for good behaviour. To another, in spite of influential backing, it was definitely refused. With unerring instinct the monarch imposed checks and held the balance even. An amused and applauding nation supported the Crown against a routed minister, and a baffled parliamentary majority. Instinctively Queen Victoria turned to those middle classes where political power resided. Their virtues she shared, and their foibles she condoned. Their moral standards were hers, and with their simple religious beliefs she profoundly sympathized. No head of the State, however selected, could have supplied the nation with a figure in more perfect accord with their prejudices.

When the Queen celebrated the sixtieth year of her reign, the British Empire gathered round her with ecstatic splendour. When, a few years later, death came, the great inarticulate masses of her subjects, of all races and colours, spread over the face of

the earth, mourned for her with genuine sorrow.

Such was the monarchical revival in England during the nineteenth century. It is difficult to imagine any system of popular election that would have provided the nation with a great functionary of this type.

King Edward, though cast in a different mould, inherited many of his mother's gifts. They were, however, modified or strengthened by the masculinity which was his chief characteristic and most potent charm. Since the days of the Tudors Englishmen had not possessed so manly a monarch. Yet his instinct for the worth of a man was as keen as any woman's. His tact, a sense of fitness on all occasions and in every presence, amounted to genius. He had no illusions himself, but he destroyed none in others. His heart, generous and expansive, was in thrall to reason. Long experience of flattery had given him its measure. He could display anger, but resentment never. Forgiveness of personal injury was no effort to him. A breach of public duty was rarely condoned. Orderliness was, perhaps, the keynote of his

nature. In affairs great and small he loved order that was rigid but never pedantic.

King Edward's masterly shrewdness perceived the difference between the England his mother had ruled and the people over whom he was summoned to preside. The Education Acts had done their work. A generation trained under totally different conditions, literate, and provided with cheap newspapers, a people pliant before the rhetorical devices of men sprung from themselves, had taken the place of the opulent middle class on whose support Queen Victoria had relied. The King, with a wide and humorous gesture, gathered the common people in his wake. They followed him with laughing complacency, and they were prepared to follow him anywhere, proud of his manhood and confident in his good sense. With characteristic penetration, they divined his regard for ordered society and his love of fair play. It was all they asked of him.

The King's knowledge of men taught him their relative values. His preferences did not blind him, and his scepticism was so sweet-blooded that he was incapable of

exaggerating human weakness. He is said to have cared for display, but he was gorgeous himself, and appreciated that unrestrained beauty which is so characteristic of England and her children. If he liked pageants, it was as he liked the Derby, for its wide expression of a people's holiday. In solemn moments no one surpassed the King in gravity of soul or outward decorum. When called to the throne, he had lived every moment of his own fifty years of life. He had gathered knowledge from men on the highway of the world. Experience had filled his thoughts with reflections beyond all book learning. If the restraining influence of the Crown upon indiscreet or ill-considered action is its primary function, no one was better equipped by upbringing and by natural gifts to exercise it than King Edward. No elective machinery could have supplied the nation with a leader who so captivated its fancy; and if the throne had been submitted to the test of a popular election, among all Englishmen then alive or alive to-day no one would have had a chance with the King.

During the past eight eventful years the traditions of the monarchy have remained unchanged, and are sustained with a quiet dignity that is universally acknowledged, and with a sympathetic regard for the loftiest interests of the Empire that is appreciated to its farthest confines.

The Bureaucratic Government of the United Kingdom since the outbreak of the war resembles the Parliamentary Government as carried on by Queen Victoria and Mr. Gladstone in 1870 as little as the Government of those days resembled that of Cromwell. Dimly, perhaps, but surely, the men fighting in France realize the change that has come over their country. During the long periods of waiting, between yesterday's escape and the battle to-morrow, men examine, argue, and discuss. Few customs, habits, and institutions pass unchallenged. Religious beliefs, political compromises, monarchy, the Church, heredity, eugenics, marriage, concubinage, the great shibboleth democracy, are torn, rarely with passion, always with daring frankness, to tatters. The whole order of society is under a micro-

scope, scanned by a million eyes, to the accompaniment of the tremendous music of the guns. War has loosed new and volcanic forces. It has swept away the process—slow, broadening from precedent to precedent—that our fathers found so dignified and becoming. “Cabinet” government, with its unrecorded mysteries, is no more. Old names survive, but they have lost their meaning. An avalanche of women has been hurled into the political chaos. Institutions as well as ideas will have to be re-sorted. That discussion and heart-searching should occupy those long dreary interludes while men are waiting for death in the trenches is not surprising.

So long as the human heart is strong and the human reason weak royalty will be preferred to a republic, was the verdict of a writer whose best-known work glorified the Constitution of our country as he knew it fifty years since. To-day his aphorism will not stand the test of examination, for we can reason about the monarchy and defend it by argument.

It is not strictly true that kingship appeals

to sentiment rather than to reason. Tradition counts for much, and so does symbolism. There is undoubtedly the mystery that hedges a king. A president may have been a next-door neighbour, and may be so again; but the descendant of King Alfred possesses points in the eyes of men of all classes who think of themselves as Anglo-Saxons. But there are also practical, workaday reasons that give a king preference over an elected head of a state. A concrete monarch appeals more readily to plain minds than an indefinite republicanism. That a sovereign state should possess a head or chief is here taken for granted. The point is not in dispute up to now, although it may be raised hereafter, should the sovereignty of states become merged in cosmopolitan federations.

Looking to the recent experiences of Britain, we can perceive many advantages in the character, habits, and atmosphere of the English Court that republics lack. An English monarch, in possessing a family right to pre-eminence, can afford to establish a standard of morals and manners that

an elected president finds difficult to impose. A king's authority in such matters is unquestioned. By inherited tradition, by upbringing, by surroundings, his judgment is assumed to be superior and his decisions are undisputed. When he speaks *ex cathedrâ* upon matters of social order, his word is final. He can afford to impose restraints, and frame rules of conduct, that men and women are ready to obey, because they believe the sovereign to be above social pressure and to be free from partisan prejudice. The King belongs to no party and to no class. He is nominally the head of an Episcopal Church, but he is the head of a Presbyterian Church as well. He is bred in a special atmosphere, safeguarded from the jealousy and envy, the triumphs and failures, the petty temptations and even the ordinary pleasures of the mass of the people he rules. This aloofness is believed to guarantee freedom from obsession in social questions, and in point of fact it does so.

Social gradation and social prejudice ramify deep down into our social fabric,

and an Arbiter *Elegantiarum* is as necessary to the English people as a conductor to an orchestra. Men and women will yield their judgment before the dictum of a royal prince who would flout an elected representative. In the governance of mankind nothing is small or great. Everything matters. A war, changing the face of Europe, has been brought about by incivility to a public functionary, and a revolution has been precipitated by a song.

Probing deeper, other and graver merits are to be found attached to kingship. A monarch's education and training are specially directed towards the functions he has to fulfil. Royalty is not only a caste, but a profession. An ordinary citizen, with a unanimous popular vote behind him, is no better equipped to be the constitutional head of a state than a plain man is equipped to argue a complicated case before the High Court of Appeal. He can doubtless make a more or less lame appearance.

The President of the United States is not a "constitutional" sovereign in the European sense. He is a special functionary,

endowed with authority and powers wholly dissimilar from those enjoyed by any head of any state in the world to-day. His duties, if they are well performed, require aptitudes and gifts of a special order, and have to be sought for by a rude enough method among the citizens of the United States. If the King of England were asked to exercise the powers entrusted to the President of the American Constitution, it is improbable that the monarchy would remain the appanage of a particular family. The American President belongs to a party or group, and he cannot dispossess himself of this qualification or drawback. An English monarch's freedom from party ties, his independence of party bias, his hereditary isolation, his domestic seclusion, are guarantees, in the eyes of the people, that he will perform impartially the duties assigned to him by the law of the land. That the King can do no wrong is not only a convenient constitutional maxim; it is the honest opinion of the mass of the people. They would as soon believe the Archbishop of Canterbury capable of cheating at cards.

The instinct of the people is perfectly rational and sound. However an archbishop might be tempted, so long as he occupied Lambeth Palace he would not carry the ace of trumps up his lawn sleeve. So long as a king of England is the head of a royal family, so long as he occupies the throne by virtue of his hereditary right under the Act of Settlement, he will do no wrong in the sense in which the word is understood by the people over whom he reigns.

If the sovereign had been educated and trained in Bloomsbury, if he were elected to preside over Mr. Lloyd George for four or five years and then returned to his Bloomsbury home, the safeguards would not possess the same potency, and if they did the masses of the people would not feel the same confidence or security.

The training of a prince implies familiarity with men and affairs beyond the reach of ordinary persons, and of this advantage the nation reaps full benefit. From childhood royal princes are in the habit of meeting men and women of every class and station.

They can move freely in any society. A Prince of Wales does not require to be introduced. At home and abroad the heir to the throne can and does become personally acquainted with the men who govern. They meet without restraint on either side. Every statesman in Europe was personally known to King Edward. He could tell his ministers all about the men with whom they were in correspondence and whom they had never seen. This was an asset in the conduct of difficult negotiations of incalculable value.

When King Edward sat smoking a cigar with Gambetta in a Paris restaurant, he was aware that no "president" could have ventured so far. And until Gambetta passed from the stage, serious difficulties between Great Britain and France melted away. Whether in the society of foreign potentates or ministers of state, whether gossiping with trainers and jockeys at Newmarket or Chantilly, whether chatting with lord mayors or mayors in the provinces, whether sitting in a miner's cottage or a Highland bothie, an English king is always at his ease: a "president" never. The

one has nothing to lose and the other so much. Every elected head of the State fears to compromise himself or his friends. The King cannot be compromised. The King is free and independent. His place is assured. He owes it to no man. No man or group of men has a hold over him. So when as head of the State he is called upon to "approve" of individual claims to place, power, or rewards, his judgment is free from bias, and his questions and criticisms receive an attentive hearing from the designating political authority.

Every promotion to the higher ranks of the public service, naval, military, and civil, was submitted to Queen Victoria, and reasons had to be given and questions answered. Every list of "Honours" was carefully scrutinized by the Queen herself. Her published correspondence shows the care that she bestowed upon these matters. No "president" would be given credit for that impartiality which was universally accorded to the Queen. In higher matters of State a king possesses experience, records, and traditions that no president can claim.

The Royal Archives at Windsor are a mine of wealth in a country like ours, where precedent is honoured as a counterpoise to ill-considered action and jobbery. The accumulation of such archives depends upon family custodianship. No "president" chosen from a party group could afford to leave traces of his rule to his successor. The custom of British sovereigns since the accession of George III has been to avoid as far as possible verbal explanations of policy from ministers. Writing to the sovereign must often have been tedious to Peel or Gladstone, but they never shrank from a process that possessed the double advantage of clarifying their own minds and of placing on record, with secrecy upon which they could rely, their reasoned opinions.

No one familiar with the inner history of Queen Victoria's reign can dispute the value to the State of the intimate communion between sovereign and minister. The letters of her ministers to the Queen would never have been written to a president, who would have carried them away in a carpet-bag.

Not only would English literature have been the poorer, but the policy of the country during those eventful years might have been less restrained. Influence as distinct from authority is the peculiar appanage of a royal prince. Substitute a president for a monarch and influence dwindles, while if authority is not enhanced at the expense of ministerial responsibility, where is the gain?

Mr. Gladstone laid stress upon the "aggregate of direct influence normally exercised by the sovereign upon the counsels and proceedings of ministers," and the veil lifted when Queen Victoria's correspondence was published substantiated his assertion.

The entry of America into the European orbit, and the clearer recognition by Englishmen of the powers granted to a president of the United States by the American Constitution, may lead to examination and contrast of the two systems of government. It may presently be desired by Great Britain and the Dominions and a democratized India to fasten duties and responsibilities upon the head of the State that are now exercised by a body of persons subject to popular

control. Under such circumstances, exception might be taken to the hereditary employment of such expanded powers. There is, however, another method of strengthening the execution while retaining the advantages of the hereditary principle. Even as matters stand to-day the Executive in Great Britain has been greatly strengthened. It was an inevitable outcome of the war. The present Prime Minister enjoys a freedom of action far superior to that of Lord Palmerston or of Lord Salisbury. A system that leaves the head of the State untrammelled by popular election, and free to exercise popular functions, possessing a moderating and unifying influence over a widely extended empire, appears better suited to our Imperial needs than the system so elaborately contrived by Alexander Hamilton and his Federalist colleagues.

A return to the constitutional practice of the pre-war period is unlikely. The evolution of our system of government has proceeded too rapidly and too far. Imperial and Commonwealth needs have put a heavy strain upon the ancient forms of parliamen-

tary rule at Westminster. The " Cabinet " —the mysterious political growth that sprang from the compromises of the eighteenth century—has suffered a war-change. The Dominions and India are taking a share in the direction of British policy that they are not likely to relinquish.

But reflecting minds in the trenches and beyond, while noting these changes, and while endeavouring to sift political chaff from wheat, may hesitate before concluding that a republican form of government is the last word of democracy. They would do wisely to make sure that the elective plan—itsself a compromise—under which presidents are chosen, yields better results than that process known as heredity, under which King George ascended the throne. The King is not a power, but an influence. If the great masses of the people throughout the Empire will only grasp the importance of this distinction, the stability of the monarchy is not likely to be shaken.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH

FOR the majority of fighting soldiers the Church of England has no meaning. Her history, her services, and her functions are outside the range of their knowledge and experience. These young men would call themselves Christians, but rather from want of any other respectable classification than from an acceptance of the doctrines and conduct that Christianity implies and imposes. For Christianity and the Church, so far as they are aware, have no necessary cohesion. Of Christian dogma they speak often coldly and critically, though rarely with disrespect. Of the Church it is otherwise.

The army chaplains, of all denominations, brave, kindly, helpful as they are, have passed difficult hours in amicable discussions that they themselves have invited. On Sunday evenings and on many weekdays

they have encouraged debate and instigated free discussion. In hospitals and clearing stations they have sat at bedsides receiving confidences and giving counsel. If the hierarchy will listen to these devoted sons of the Church, and if they take action in accordance with deductions they cannot fail to draw, they may preserve the Church of England. They should listen, too, to the ministers of the Presbyterian communities—above all to the men from the north.

It is difficult for the inhabitants of cities to understand village life. When a country lad drifts into a town, he speedily forgets his boyhood. Memory is submerged in violent contrast. In the country a village clusters round the Church, its most conspicuous object. In cities the Church is submerged. Street-bred people cannot understand the place of the Church in the rural life of the country. In their eyes the country parson stands for reaction. He is a parasite living somnolently in infinite contentment. He cares little for education that is not doctrinal. He pays low rates of wages himself and discourages the idea

that they are inadequate. He believes in almsgiving as the panacea for poverty. He wears broadcloth, but holds fustian to be good enough for his parishioners. He preaches submission to the will of God, when he means the squire. He looks with cold disapproval on the public-house, but gets up bazaars. A local tyrant himself, he requires humility from others. Upon the village schoolmaster and the recipient of a food-ticket alike he imposes the test of conformity.

This is the caricature that passes for high verity in the eyes of the townsman when he endeavours to argue that the Church is responsible for the "degrading lethargy" of rural life in England. He does not realize the monotony of the English village, its quiet, uneventful days slowly passing aloof from the great world; its dark long evenings, unenlightened by the humours of the cinematograph. The communal life even of a French village is unknown in ours. No gleam from the outer world penetrates the hedgerows. Great artists in the past, Crabbe, George Eliot,

and Mrs. Gaskell, have painted the picture. To-day Hardy and Barrie and Synge have sketched in illuminating detail. In these small backwaters of humanity is obliged by his profession to reside a priest. He is there as the guardian of a shrine that for centuries has stood unchanged; only the lichen has spread over the face of its stonework. Under the porch is hung a roll of names, his predecessor's since, perhaps, the tenth century of the Christian era. Their bones lie under the yew trees. The dogma this man preaches from the worn pulpit on Sundays has been modified or altered, but the gospel is unchanged. He has come, an educated, experienced man from the outer world, and has brought with him its wider significance. He has travelled in Italy and Spain. He has talked with poets and politicians. He has even read the *Quarterly Review* and seen an aeroplane. A son has fought for the Empire in India; another was lost in the Antarctic seas. A daughter has returned to the village on a holiday from the hospital which she has chosen to make her home. The fresh air from the great

spaces beyond blows through the vicarage upon the lintels of these isolated cottages. That is one interpretation of the Church's work in rural England, altogether apart from its spiritual side.

The clergyman is an educational influence of superlative value, although he is not the official teacher. His wider knowledge, based on experience that his surroundings lack, permeates these small communities. He supplies for his parish a peripatetic school of simple philosophy, cheap certainly, and ridiculous sometimes, but invaluable as is the village well, whose waters would not pass any severe hygienic test. Replace him by the teacher, it is argued, and the money that he costs will do more to widen the horizon of these peasants than his dubious personality.

How easy, and yet how difficult! For a schoolmaster is rarely a teacher, and learning is far removed from education.

To the young Scotsman this reasoning appeals feebly. Thanks to the old-fashioned dominie, thanks to a century and a half of acquired custom, thanks to the value long

ago put upon education in the Scottish glens, thanks to the system of bursaries for ambitious lads, Scotland is truly, as her sons maintain, sixty years ahead of rural England. There is no comparison even now, under model Boards of Education, spending freely upon their scholastic system, between the average Scottish and English schoolmaster.

It is not a matter of educational tests, but of upbringing, of social gifts, of aptitudes, and of intellectual atmosphere. It would take a generation or two to produce the like in England. Destroy the Established Church, abolish the parish priest, substitute for him the only type of schoolmaster of which there is any supply available, and every English village becomes intellectually derelict for a time.

This reasoning may impress the men who criticize and are ready to destroy the position held by the village clergy. It will not convince them. The picture engraved upon their minds of the idle, ultra-Tory, patronizing, archaic vicar has cut too deep. It may, however, lead them to pause. Upon

these matters women will have much to say, and women have hitherto been loyal to the Church.

In cities and larger towns its position is both stronger and weaker. The vicar of an urban parish is a less conspicuous figure. He excites no jealousy, and criticism passes him by in the crowd. His stipend is uncoveted by town folk and his activities unnoticed. The vicarage is a street number. He shares with the rate-collector, the district visitor, and the sanitary inspector the honour of calling on the poor. Battling against heavy odds, he fights a clean way for the Cross through grimy streets. The obsequious smile of the postulant, and the smug gravity of his churchwardens, leave his reason clear and his heart unscarred. He is the army chaplain of the Church Militant, the type of padre with whom the young men, fresh from the trenches, love to wrestle in argument. In Flanders they will talk with him by the hour; but in Bermondsey they will greet him with a nod. He possesses none of the attributes of the tyrant, and does not strike his neighbours as reactionary or

archaic. But they "have no use for him," and the cinema is next-door and the music hall over the way. The *Evening News* can be got at every street corner, and there are cheap trains to and fro on Sunday.

The young men and women who will shortly have a predominant influence over the future of Great Britain are untrained in the art of government, and quite inexperienced beyond a contracted orbit. Social problems are compared by them with their obvious momentary needs. They cannot tell whether a tree grows from its root or its top. Like children, their desires are clear to themselves, but they can trace no relation between the fulfilment of them and the social organism that renders their fulfilment possible.

If older men are blind, if they misunderstand the portents, then the resistless stream of young men returning from the war, and of young women overflowing the channels of employment, will be certain to sweep away every obstacle that appears to stand between them and their ambitions and their enjoyment of life.

Some years ago the Scottish Churches recognized the danger. They are drawing close together and seeking "unity of command." Scepticism and indifference had led to a marked change in the attitude of the Scottish people towards the Church of their fathers. The authority of the minister had for some time been on the wane. The number of communicants had dwindled. The sacred character of the Sabbath was violated; cheap newspapers and cheap science were doing their work. In the face of peril the old schisms are likely to be healed in Scotland. It is an example and a warning to those who cherish the Church of England, not for its spiritual mission only, but as an organic feature of the institutions of our country.

To direct the revenues of the Church to education, to turn cathedrals into national museums, and churches into school-halls, are proposals sufficiently plausible to attract the superficial glance of a new and inexperienced electorate. The clergy of all denominations in England should take heed. Lincoln and York, Canterbury and

Gloucester, are not only provincial and diocesan centres. They are the pinnacles of a great edifice that stands for the material well-being of a large section of the people, as well as for the spiritual life of England.

When Henry Warden undermined the faith of the vassals of the Halidome, it was not long before the great Abbey of Kennaqhair became the appanage of a greedy Scottish noble. It was impossible in the sixteenth century to convince the Roman prelates of their danger. The hold of the Catholic Church upon the people had been so long established. The hierarchy was powerful and wealthy. Its adherents were men and women of the highest rank. In spite of a display of courage and undaunted tenacity, Catholicism was spoliated and destroyed by the determined attack of a few enthusiastic preachers. Knox, powerful as he was, proved powerless to save the Church revenues and buildings for the scheme of education that he favoured, and incidentally preserve them for the æsthetic benefit of Scotland. The Catholic clergy would not listen to compromise, and mis-

judged the strength of their detractors. The lesson should not be thrown away.

To a Catholic of the sixteenth century the Reformation appeared to be the negation of all spiritual life, and of Christianity itself. Destruction of the quiet, monastic life, whatever element of truth there may have been in its abuses, seemed to the Catholic an act of sacrilege. That the monks might yield some of their privileges and their superfluous wealth to the hard-pressed laity was to desecrate the house of God. No accommodation was possible. Consequently the clash of competing interests led to results that benefited nobody. The waste of wealth was only equalled by the loss of opportunity. Scotland lost splendid monuments of Gothic art, and a great chance was missed of applying wealth, learning, and individual work to the moral, intellectual, and material benefit of her people. The Roman Catholic Church lost everything.

The storm gathered slowly and spread gradually over the face of the land, but it was only by degrees that the devastation became apparent.

The men and women who, to-day, misconceive the uses of the clergy, undervalue their labours, dislike their influence, and scoff at their transcendental beliefs, may succeed in bringing about one of two results. They may provoke an act of pure destruction, and leave their country, themselves, and their children's children the poorer by the loss of so much that is beautiful, healthy, and inspiring. Or they may, calmly and without passion, prevail upon the clergy to come into line with the spiritual requirements of the modern world.

In order to succeed in this they would have to convince the clergy that the Church exists for the sake of the masses, and that the masses are the best judges of their own requirements. This would be a difficult but constructive act, and in the spirit of sound reformation.

Meantime the clergy, if they are wise, will meet these young people half-way, and will conform their mode of life to the demands of men and women who have been born again in the course of the war. If the people insist that their spiritual pastors should be

lay teachers as well, the clergy would be wise to submit. Many prejudices would have to be abandoned; life would be harder in many cases; habits would have to be changed and sacrifices incurred. But fundamental truths would remain in the custody of the Church.

The experiences of the war have demonstrated beyond all question the virtues of individual English men and women. It has been as though a race had risen from the dead. Courage, endurance, soberness, obedience, sacrifice! If from inability to understand the moral dilemma resulting from a war that has made such demands upon the religious beliefs of the people, the clergy cling to old-established habits, to antiquarianism, formalism, and euphemism, they will lose the best chance the Church of England has ever had, and maybe the last.

Dogmatic theology makes no appeal to youths and maidens hard pressed by the hurry of the modern world. Time is wasted in preaching the Word to the unconverted, in old lovable and simple fashion. Scepticism and indifference towards transcendental

things never yield to argument. Against the mind that denies or doubts the presence of God no reasoning prevails. It is sufficient to remember,

“That almost everyone, when age,
Disease, or sorrows strike him,
Inclines to think there is a God,
Or something very like Him.”

But the value to the nation of a corporate effort, such as the Church of England, instinct with a sense of national life, can make if it pleases, is great enough to justify its maintenance by an electorate, however careless of spiritual things, however cold to the higher aspects of religion, and sceptical of its truths.

If the clergy—and the experience of the war shows that they can do so—are ready to sacrifice ease, to subdue controversy, and suppress retort; if they are prepared to change their habits, modify their practice, and transmute their functions, they will suffer no moral loss, and they will give the Church in England and Scotland a stronger hold over the soul of the nation than she has ever yet established.

CHAPTER III

THE CABINET

THE Cabinet has been called a Board of Control chosen by the Legislature. This description is inaccurate. The Cabinet in its origin was a secret committee of the Privy Council, chosen by the sovereign. It was a growth—some considered it an excrescence—on the dual system of government under which the sovereign selected his ministers, but with the consent of the House of Commons.

The Privy Council has now ceased to be an operative part of the Constitution, and has become a mere list of persons whose party services receive a titular reward midway between the Peerage and a baronetcy. The Cabinet is no longer selected by the sovereign, but by the Prime Minister of the day, whose tenure of office depends upon

his command of a majority in the House of Commons.

Importance has been attached by theorists to the fusion of executive with legislative power. The evolution of the Cabinet authority was assumed to ensure this constitutional result, and did so, with more or less success, up to the outbreak of the war in 1914. Then came a rapid change. Cabinets in the eighteenth century were small, but their tendency was to expand. William III and Queen Anne presided over a Cabinet composed of six or seven ministers. The early Hanoverian kings, unable to speak English, ceased to preside at the Cabinet, and abandoned this function to the First Minister. The secrecy of Cabinet discussion was always rigidly maintained. Even the normal meetings of "His Majesty's confidential servants" were unrecorded until the institution was over a century old. No secretary was ever present, and no minutes of the Cabinet proceedings were kept. Only on rare occasions a document called a "minute of the Cabinet" was formulated, and the names of the ministers approving or dis-

approving were placed upon record in the archives of the sovereign.

The Prime Minister was in the habit of writing to the sovereign after Cabinet meetings a short précis of its decisions in the form of a confidential letter; but the literary gifts and caligraphy of Prime Ministers varied, and these documents hardly constitute an accurate record, nor were they at any time used for purposes of reference.

The Cabinet Council was unrecognized as an integral part of the Constitution, and the term Prime Minister was no more than a complimentary expression, until Mr. Balfour obtained for his successors, though not for himself, its official recognition.

During the twenty years previous to the war, the powers and influence of the Cabinet Council had waned. This loss of power as well as prestige was due to two causes—the numerical increase of its members and the growth of the ascendancy of the Prime Minister. The size of the Cabinet led to the informal practice of an inner Cabinet or ring of the most influential ministers.

In Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet of 1880 important questions were discussed and decided by a small group within the Cabinet, which merely registered their decrees often after action had been taken. This practice became normal as time rolled on. It contained the germ of the plan now in force under Mr. Lloyd George. Necessarily the Cabinet Council, though still retaining its place in the public eye, suffered a diminution of authority.

The Prime Minister, meanwhile, was ceasing to be a minister *primus inter pares*, and was becoming vested with sole executive authority, relying upon the support, accorded to him personally, of the House of Commons, rather than upon the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. Mr. Gladstone was erroneously credited with having established complete supremacy over his colleagues, and was accused of exercising over them dictatorial authority. But Mr. Balfour certainly did; and his and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman's decisions were unquestioned by their colleagues. Perhaps the final evolution of the Prime Minister from the chrysalis stage

occurred when Lord Salisbury survived his dismissal of Lord Randolph Churchill.

When forming one of his later administrations, Mr. Gladstone said that the next most serious step to taking a colleague into the Cabinet was leaving out a colleague who had once been admitted. He meant by this to draw attention to the gravity of cheapening Cabinet office, and of lowering the prestige of the Cabinet as the supreme executive organ of the nation's will. Events have achieved what he would have looked upon as a deplorable tendency in our system of government. The fact that there are three ex-Premiers living to-day, and a countless horde of ministers and ex-ministers floating about the parliamentary lobbies, has depreciated the credit of official life in public estimation. Outside a comparatively small body of parliamentary reporters, there is not a man alive who could tell off Mr. Asquith's Cabinet of twenty-three without a mistake. Yet there are still numerous readers of political history who are perfectly familiar with every figure of the Grenville ministry or Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet of 1841.

If the Cabinet, as a collective instrument of government, carries insufficient moral weight, its day is over, for as a piece of executive mechanism it is completely out of date. During the past thirty years those who have had chances of watching the inner working of the constitutional machine would agree that a Cabinet of poor quality is generally the more efficient instrument of government, provided that the Prime Minister possesses character and decision. The Cabinet of 1880, crammed with notabilities, containing men of high capacity, eloquent, and enjoying popular influence, was the weakest Cabinet of recent times, and that of Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman was the strongest.

A Cabinet works well or ill according as it is loyal to its chief, and if its members are in agreement upon broad and simple political issues. Disloyalty between colleagues and a conflict of principles among its members are fatal to Cabinet efficiency.

As politics, therefore, become more complex, as political sects become more numerous, as personal ties become slacker

and personal rivalries more acute, efficient government by means of such a committee, collectively responsible for secret decisions, becomes more difficult. Under the pressure of the war it has become impossible. Is there any good reason to think that this is a passing phase, and that when peace comes the old traditional customs of parliamentary rule under the control of a Cabinet Council can be resumed with advantage to the State ?

The population of the United Kingdom has quadrupled since the reign of George III. The Empire has grown out of all recognition. The business dealing with the affairs of Great Britain and of the Empire, transacted daily, has been proved by the experience of the war to require a change of method, as well as a large expansion of officials. The method was changed when Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister. It was his first ministerial act.

Before the war the administration of their departments had occupied the whole time of the departmental ministers, of which the Cabinet was mainly composed. They had no leisure to consider questions of grave

import that arose from day to day in spheres of vital interest to the nation, but which were not classified under departmental headings. This duty fell to the Prime Minister. He possessed no departmental staff, and no "office," other than a few private secretaries. He worked on a system inherited from Sir Robert Walpole, and his work overwhelmed him. It was not performed. Some years prior to the war he had been furnished with a secretariat for the purpose of co-ordinating the previsionsal efforts of the Admiralty and the War Office. This was called the Committee of Imperial Defence. Fortunate in its personnel, the Secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence had made preparation for the outbreak of war. Its remarkable and patriotic secretary foresaw the necessity of stretching out a hand beyond the departments with which he was specially concerned. Sir Maurice Hankey induced successive Prime Ministers to realize that modern war was a matter in which every State department was concerned. By means of sub-committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence,

almost every problem that was bound to arise if war broke out received some consideration. A "War Book" was prepared, and its value will be appreciated when the whole history of the war is laid bare.

In August 1914 Mr. Asquith at once took possession of the secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence. The evolution of this secretariat into a secretariat for the Cabinet was natural and inevitable. As the war progressed a further evolution became consequential and necessary. The War Cabinet was formed and its secretariat was strengthened. Mr. Lloyd George roughly divided departmental administration from the duties of considering, and settling, the larger problems raised by the daily management of the business of the war. The system is still imperfect, and requires constant revision. The question for the nation is whether the new system, improved as it can be, shall be applied to the government of the country when the war ceases.

For years to come the storm-swell of the war will continue to break upon the shore of our country's domestic wants. A "Peace

Book " will prove to be as grave a necessity as was the " War Book." No one supposes that it will be possible to abandon the system of separating administration from the business of the Supreme Executive, until a considerable time has elapsed. War conditions are bound to have their aftermath. Emergence from them will take time, and the work of a Peace Cabinet will absorb as much energy as is bestowed to-day upon the business of the war. The sessions of the War Cabinet are practically permanent. The old summons to " His Majesty's confidential servants " has become a memory. The War Cabinet is in constant session, and possesses a number of most capable secretaries. Its work is simplified by agenda tables, by preparatory memoranda, and its discussions, as well as its decisions, are placed on record under the supervision of one of the very ablest of public servants. There is no resemblance between the secret conclaves of the Cabinet Council of previous governments, and the meetings of Mr. Lloyd George's War Cabinet.

No one with knowledge and experience of

the conduct of business before the war and at the present time, is under any illusion as to the possibility of again returning to the older plan. Publicists who know little of the inner working of the Cabinet system, except from hearsay, clamour for its revival. Professional politicians, for diverse reasons connected with party motive or personal ambition, follow suit. But with all its imperfections the as yet unsystematized system is better suited to the requirements of the Empire, than the old Cabinet Council which had become obsolete before the war.

The new plan possesses another advantage. It is adaptable to the aspirations of the Dominions to take part in Imperial deliberations, and to exercise influence over Imperial decisions. These aspirations have been indulged, and cannot remain unfulfilled. The new Cabinet system has been evolved upon lines well known in the practice of the science of government, as Englishmen have for generations understood that science. It was born under circumstances of national necessity; and though modifications and improvements follow quickly as fresh necessities

arise, the principle of a small executive Cabinet Council, free from the onerous duties of administration, is certain to remain the keystone of the arch of government when peace comes.

That the question will be fully debated before the tribunal of public opinion is certain. Attempts will be made to confuse it with the plan adopted of appointing controllers of all kinds, with their vast horde of bureaucratic employees. This plan is a compromise with the exigencies of such a war as this, and does not possess the element of permanency. If the new electorate insist upon hearing reasoned arguments, and require to see and to examine statements of fact, as to the comparative working of the two Cabinet systems, both before and during the war, there is little doubt of the issue. The first step should be the circulation for popular use of the War Cabinet Report for the year 1917, compressed into a readable form, and sold at the lowest price; and this should be followed by an official estimate, to be framed by authority of the War Cabinet itself, of the probable rate of reduction of

the volume of business devolving upon the Executive Government, over a series of years at the expiration of the war. With this information before them the people can be trusted to exercise a sound judgment and to decide upon a sound policy.

No rhetorical device should be permitted to obscure a simple business proposition. The various functions of government, both legislative and executive, can be readily understood by plain men. There is no mystery about them, though the professional politician dearly loves the people to think so.

To rule by oligarchic methods is an art. The greater the artist and the more complete his powers of mystification, the simpler his task becomes and the better the people are governed. A democratic form of government should be divorced from art altogether ; otherwise it is dishonest. If the people are to be consulted, if they are to rule, they must know the whole truth in order to exercise a free judgment.

In order to choose wisely between the old and the new Cabinet systems, the people of

Great Britain and the Dominions should insist upon receiving impartial statements of their working, and, having obtained them, there is very little doubt what the decision will be.

CHAPTER IV

PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENT is not the House of Commons.

This is not a platitude, but a reminder. Recent legislation, although it has weakened the constitutional powers of the House of Lords, has not destroyed its influence. Other events and developments may have done so. It is too early to judge. Theorists and publicists continue to discuss the bicameral system. Their views are of minor importance. The vital issue is whether the great mass of the people are not feeling as indifferent towards our parliamentary traditions as they are towards Church establishment. There are indications that a preacher with strong convictions, with a clear hold upon a simple plan of applying the principles of democracy by a more direct method—Rousseau's, for example—would have little

difficulty in overturning parliamentary government based upon representation.

“America,” the working men of the north are fond of saying, “has not come into this war for nothing.” They then proceed to use arguments, familiar enough, in favour of separating legislative from executive functions, advocating a wide delegation of legislative authority to sections of the United Kingdom, where different habits, ideas, and requirements prevail, coupled with an executive chosen by popular vote for a definite period.

The points were put to the writer by an intelligent artisan, who is working for the State at a low rate of wage, and hears these matters constantly discussed.

“We do not mean to let Somersetshire control the requirements of Fife. The people in the south are sixty years behind us. We have no time to look after their interests, but we do not mean them to regulate ours. Before the war we were left behind by the Germans in education and commerce. Information vital to us could only be obtained in Potsdam. The cause of this was a defec-

tive parliamentary system, under which legislative and executive functions were muddled up. The Americans manage better. So do the Swiss. We must alter our system. Great Britain's external business we should be willing to trust to a Prime Minister elected for four years, provided that no secret arrangements were valid, that diplomacy was abolished, that war could not be declared or treaties made without an appeal to popular vote."

This summary of the views of a man, given as they were in considerable detail, showing that full discussion takes place among the working classes upon these subjects, contains nothing very new, except its menace. It is folly to ignore the fact that popular opinion is in travail, and that the new electorate, men and women, is unlikely to listen to old advocates of old measures, but is determined only to listen to protagonists who have new measures to offer.

An octogenarian House of Commons is ignored by the masses of the people. Its debates are not reported by the papers they read. Its members are hardly known to

them by name. There is not a member of the House of Commons, save one, who commands the public attention enjoyed by the anonymous leader-writers of the *Daily Mail*. No local member of Parliament can compete in influence with the editors of great local newspapers like the *Glasgow Herald*. The present Prime Minister's speeches are read because they are reported and because they are referred to in leading articles. No minor luminary is heard beyond the four walls within which he speaks.

The Press has usurped the functions of Parliament as they were performed in the nineteenth century. It controls the Executive, and makes and unmakes ministries. Parliament, parliamentary tradition, together with statesmanship as a school of politics, have lost their hold on the faith of the nation. Mr. Henderson is reported to have said at Nottingham, that he had been brought up to believe government to be a difficult art, for which special training and special education were requisite. Experience of office had disabused the Labour Party leaders of this delusion. Cabinet

Councils, shrouded in mystery, were mere mumbo-jumbo, and two or three administrations could be formed out of Labour men who would govern the country no worse, and perhaps better, than the present Government.

Mr. Henderson's judgment may be faulty. That is not of much importance. The gravity of his remark lies in its widespread acceptance by his hearers. It could not be otherwise. One statesman after another has been subjected to the bitterest criticism in the Press. Politicians have been ridiculed and reviled, individually and in groups. Refutation has proved to be impossible, as the critics hold every dominating position. The Press wins its way by attack, and by the possession of the initiative. Explanations by the men attacked are treated as excuses. Their reputation is sullied and their influence undermined. By this process the man himself, and the institution of which he forms an integral part, are deprived of the authority that they are elected to exercise. No underpinning of the parliamentary fabric appears to be

possible. The evil has progressed too far. The superstructure requires to be lightened, and new additions erected upon solid foundations, as much in harmony with an ancient building as circumstances will permit.

The separation of legislative from executive functions; delegation of legislative powers by the nation to provincial assemblies; a federal parliamentary body for financial control; a judicial check upon imperfect legislation; a "referendum" to the nation upon certain reserved matters of national importance; an executive chosen by direct election every four or five years; an annual deliberative Imperial Conference,—these are the projects that are under discussion both in rear of the British armies in the field, and in the workshops of the north. This fact cannot be ignored.

The widened political outlook of men who have for months been living in foreign countries, and absorbing new impressions, inclines them to examine and discuss conventionalities and institutions. These men have discovered new standards of comparison and fresh ideals. Men to whom the specula-

tions of Rousseau and Kant are unknown have unconsciously felt the impact of their buried memories. The mature wisdom of Henry Maine, of Fitzjames Stephen, of Henry Sidgwick, and of John Morley, will have to be disinterred from dusty bookshelves and formulated anew for a generation that has profited by the Education Acts of forty years ago. Ideas are novel to these men and women that appear dry as dust to a scholar of Balliol.

But there are two circumstances that cannot be overlooked by the contemptuous oligarch, and the opportunist politician. These men and women do not bow to authority in matters of opinion. They require reasoned argument, and are not content with unsupported statement. And they have been constituted by the laws of their country the final Court of Appeal. The form of government called democracy has yielded into their untrained hands a dominant voice in the settlement of the institutions under which they are to live.

They realize that representative democracy is not the only form democracy can

take. They see that representative democracy, as hitherto understood in Great Britain, is not the only method by which popular control can be exercised. The example of America, where the principle of democracy is interwoven with the oligarchic system that was believed to prevail in England under George III, does not stand alone in contrast to the democratic Constitution of Great Britain.

For in Great Britain itself and in France the principles of popular representation have been abrogated for four years. No Frenchman can be found to pretend that the French Chamber represents France, any more than anyone in England maintains that the House of Commons represents the people of Great Britain. Both these bodies are mere mass meetings of persons who have arrogated to themselves, by resolutions prolonging their self-ordained privileges, the power to sit and discuss measures, that have been placed before them by officials, under the authority of Mr. Lloyd George in England and M. Clemenceau in France. The democratic dictatorship of these statesmen has

been confirmed, not by free assemblies representing the people, but by the assent of the people themselves, given informally and passively, and registered by the Press as the vocal organ of popular opinion for the purpose.

This abnormal delegation of supreme executive authority to one man, who is free to select his instruments of government, was not a deliberate act, but an evolution of democratic rule under the pressure of the war. After this fashion precedent after precedent has been created in our past history, as emergencies have arisen, from the days of Simon de Montfort to those of Mr. Lloyd George.

But emergency measures have a curious way of becoming static. The assent to Acts of Parliament is given in Norman-French to-day, because it was the language of the Plantagenet baronage; and a Prime Minister is evolved to preside over Cabinet Councils because a Hanoverian sovereign was unable to speak English and had to be addressed by Sir Robert Walpole in Latin. The party system, believed by many to be

an emanation of high statesmanship and often defended as such, was in England a Jacobite incident, and in the United States a relic of slavery. In democratic France it does not exist, yet the French democratic form of government has stood the war test as well as ours or the American.

The Constitution of the United Kingdom has undergone a process of change that may prove to be permanent. On the other hand, it may be that the old school of parliamentarians will manage to push the State coach back into the old ruts. That they will endeavour to do so is already apparent. But it is equally clear that an effort will be made, probably under the leadership of Mr. Lloyd George, to graft permanently upon our institutions the governmental practice that has prevailed during his premiership, shorn of attributes that belong to a period of war and are unnecessary in normal times, but retaining the principle of severance between executive authority and responsibility to a legislative assembly. His success or failure will largely depend upon the international outcome of the war, upon whether an appeal

to the electorate takes place before the war ends and the response he gets, upon the secret conferences with the dominion representatives, and largely upon the Irish settlement, if that haven can be reached before peace comes.

It will depend finally upon the impression left on the mind of the masses, with whom a decision now rests, by Mr. Lloyd George's success or failure to achieve fulfilment of the task he undertook. Parliament has had little to do with the conduct of the war, beyond registering the decrees of the Prime Minister. Criticism, except of a perfunctory kind, has been silenced. The Prime Minister has looked for support to the newspaper Press and not to the House of Commons. The only effective control exercised over the action of ministers has been by the Press, and not by the House of Commons.

Although the basis of legislative power has been widened by an immense increase of the electorate, a check has been imposed simultaneously upon the interference of the Legislative with the Executive Government.

A constitutional change that may prove

to be permanent has been brought about by a combine between the Prime Minister of the day, and organs of public opinion other than the elected representatives of the people.

This novel factor cannot be ignored. The inarticulate masses do not become articulate by the mere process of putting a cross against the name of a parliamentary candidate, although the delusion that they do has been carefully fostered. An anonymous writer of leading articles, with an eye to the sale of his paper, is just as likely to represent faithfully public opinion as a Member of Parliament elected by a bare majority.

Upon this hypothesis the government of Mr. Lloyd George is founded.

Upon this hypothesis he has challenged the enemies of this country to give or receive the "knock-out blow."

In the success of the Allies, Parliament will have played a very subordinate part, and its powers and future influence cannot fail to be permanently affected by its impotence in one of the greatest crises in our history.

CHAPTER V

THE WAR AIM

THE Destruction of Militarism, a League of Nations, the Limitation of Armaments, are fine phrases. Treated rhetorically, they stir deep emotions. But the Allies have not, so far, agreed upon their interpretation or definition.

Territorial readjustment, on the other hand, is to-day, as it always has been, an indispensable attribute of a treaty of peace following upon complete victory.

President Wilson has shown in his numerous allocutions a consciousness of this primordial difficulty.

The great wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are so well known, that a schoolboy could run off lists of battles lost and won, while the names of the statesmen who provoked and of the generals who fought them are household words. But

few memories retain the list of peace treaties signed during that period, and still less their provisions. When examined, these peace treaties are almost invariably based on the conviction of their protagonists that peace was definitely assured, and in nearly every case intelligent publicists and deluded peoples believed that the latest treaty was about to herald an era of indefinite peace. But in no case did these peace treaties fulfil the hopes of their framers.

It is a chastening of the spirit to find that the statesmen and diplomatists who signed the numerous peace treaties scattered over two centuries, from the Peace of Westphalia to the revolutionary year of 1848, in nearly every case believed that they were ensuring the pacification of Europe. Nations shared the political delusions of their rulers. The more drastic the changes in the European map, the more assured were the map-makers of the permanent character of their work. There is a pathetic ring about the speeches of English ministers, and the popular rejoicings in England, over the ill-starred Treaty of Amiens.

In no case was the deception more complete than in the readjustment of 1815. The Holy Alliance then formed was signed by the "All Highests" of the day. They declared that they would govern their own peoples and deal with neighbouring states by "taking as their sole guide the precepts of the holy religion of our Saviour, namely, the precepts of justice, Christian charity, and peace."

All the European sovereigns became members of the League of Peace except the Pope. The "precepts of the Holy Religion of our Saviour," as applied by Metternich, their interpreter, succeeded in securing an embarrassed pause for a generation, after which the civilized world threw off the yoke, and plunged once more into an orgy of revolution and war, that has continued without interruption to the present time.

President Wilson is too trained a philosopher not to have misgivings whether democracy has so transformed the human heart that, after all this bloodshed, after these disappointed hopes of a better world, after similar experiences renewed again and

again in all their bitterness, man shall have ceased to be the curiously clannish animal, idealistic but objective, generous but combative, inexorably struggling for existence, that he has shown himself throughout the ages.

Democracy, however, may prove to be more than a composite and indefinite word, implying a form of government. Like the Cross, it may create a new impulse. This is the contention of its votaries. The old, semi-pagan churches, round which civilized Europe has gathered for centuries, that have connived at her blood-thirstiness and blessed her sacrifices, may come to be annexed by a novel dispensation, borne over the ocean from a younger race, bearing a name of new significance.

We are faced by the immediate human motives of the warring peoples. Common prudence demands of the few who guide the many, that they should formulate a re-arrangement of our relations, both to our friends and enemies. If they are wise, British statesmen will not postpone to the end of the war the necessary task of survey-

ing the possibilities of the future, and they cannot confine their aims and ambitions to the horizon they scan from the sea-walls of the British Empire.

Throughout history very few statesmen have successfully pursued general aims, and seized the supreme opportunity; and if Cromwell and William the Silent, Chatham and Bismarck, are exceptional names, the majority of statesmen seem to have followed some indefinite instinct, or to have improvised as opportunity arose, and thus, from want of preparation, have found themselves forced to barter away the fruits of victory.

It must be assumed that President Wilson and those who follow him will have tested their grand inspiration by the lessons of the past and the probabilities of to-day. The destruction of militarism, the limitation of armaments, a league of nations, are not the product of a novel idealism; these ideas have floated through Europe from the earliest times, and many federal plans based upon them have been given a trial.

For it has been maintained by philosophers that federation between states is of all forms

of government the one that promises to provide the strongest and safest securities for the liberty and progress of the world. Be it so. Is then a League of Nations to be taken to mean a super-federation, including in some new and as yet undefined constitution the already federated states of the world, together with countries like France and Spain and Italy, whose forms of government are much more centralized than those of the greater Powers, and China, Russia, and Japan, whose ideals and aspirations are so divergent ?

Such a problem requires cool consideration and unbiased judgment. It should not be approached with inflamed vision. That psychological error lies at the root of Germany's grievous crimes. She has seen her own future and the future of the world through a bloodshot haze. The German doctrinaires have infected the homely German people with a virus of false aims, that have proved to be their ruin. It required a Gothic simplicity of soul to believe that Germans, numerous and powerful as they are, could succeed in placing *Deutschland*

über Alles. The world is far too big and too full. Nor can America, powerful as she is, and potentially more powerful, force her ideas, however idealistic and pure, alike upon civilized and uncivilized mankind. It is a method that is totally at variance with the fundamental conception of democracy, and no grouping of nations that is conceivable can impose its volition—call it Kultur or anything else—upon an unconvinced, unconverted, and unwilling world.

However admirable, however beneficial, however desirable the sentiments of President Wilson may be, they have first to be transformed into political ideas, before there can be any reasonable chance of putting them into practice. This transformation is not a simple matter; but it is the task that lies before the chosen leaders of the Anglo-Saxon peoples here and overseas.

What is the contributory influence of the formula, a League of Peace, upon the prospects of the peace that some day will have to be signed?

When Mr. Lloyd George was explaining the functions of the Versailles Inter-Allied Coun-

cil to the House of Commons on December 20th, 1917, he stated that "nations have come together to set up a complete machine which is a clearing-house, not merely in military matters, but for financial, for economic, for shipping, for food purposes, and for all things that are essential to the life of the nations," and he went on to suggest that this Council, organized for the purposes of the war, might contain the nucleus of that League of Nations to which so many look forward, after the war, as a means for establishing permanent peace throughout the world. This suggestion, and it was nothing more, is the furthest point reached as yet by European statesmanship towards the realization of President Wilson's hopes.

If the international craftsmen whose duty it will be to compose the differences of the belligerent states share Mr. Lloyd George's optimism, and if they follow the line of the Federalists who were faced with the framing of the American Constitution, and if they adopt the methods of admirable patience and labouring constancy that were characteristic of Alexander Hamilton and his col-

leagues, they may, conceivably, dispel the hitherto familiar idea, that laws and institutions are not made, but grow. Approached in that temper and with a leaven of faith, a hitherto insoluble problem may perhaps be solved. If a League of Nations is to be formed *ad hoc* at a Peace Congress, it follows that during the concluding period of the war, unity of political guidance should supplement unity of military direction among the Allies.

The regulation of inter-allied questions, postal, telegraph and wireless, railways, shipping, aerial communications, inter-allied economics, finance, commerce and tariffs, social problems affecting aliens, education and technical development, are all matters that may yet be satisfactorily handled under some co-operating authority during the progress of the war. Add to them a careful working out of the far more difficult questions of international treaties, and an international constabulary; then the machinery existing at the conclusion of the war, thus supplemented and carefully manipulated by statesmanship, confident in

its own instincts, may provide an international policy for a still hesitating world.

The framers of schemes for a new governance of Europe are doubtless aware, that we have travelled far beyond the mediæval conception, derived from Cicero and through Augustine, that individuals and communities can only live under a system of rights and obligations imposed by the law of natural society, based on a principle of mutual non-interference. The system, formulated by Grotius, which met with general acceptance, but never received practical recognition, has no living force in Europe to-day. Our international morality is the roughest of rough compromises. International law has never resembled the legal system of rules governing civil relations, for the simple reason that international law has never in reality possessed the sanction of a combination of consenting states possessing an organized force for the purpose of imposing their combined will and decrees. It is essential to the plan advocated by the President of the United States that this sanction should be found, and it can only rest upon an inti-

mate combination of states directed to this end.

It has never so far been found possible to effect a combination between organic and what have been called inorganic states—between a state like France and a state like Austria, or even Great Britain, that rules over alien elements “supported by force, but divorced in feeling from the rest of the population.” A League of Nations presupposes the combination of such states, and their willingness to accept the decision of a Court of Arbitral Justice, that they are bound to constitute as their first co-ordinated act.

History teaches us that wars are five times out of ten caused by conflicting fundamental principles, religious or political. This being so, a state cannot reasonably be expected to run any serious risk of a wrong decision, when the interests at stake appear to the vast majority of citizens to be of the utmost gravity. Here we seem to be confronted by an insuperable obstacle, unless the moral and intellectual nature of the average human beings composing the greater communities of the world undergoes a radical change.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that when the most important questions are at issue any legal precision could be given to their solution, even though the litigants were willing to accept the judgment of an international tribunal.

To establish the moral hegemony of an international authority, that will succeed where the Papacy has failed, is the task that is about to tax the statesmanship of President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George.

If President Wilson possesses enough vision and will, if Mr. Lloyd George possesses enough genius and skill, they may succeed. They may find the key to a new polity, and they may draw after them the sceptical and the disingenuous among their colleagues at the Council table. But co-operation will be difficult to secure, in view of the differences in national character and national circumstances among the nations and loose federations, of which the Conference or Congress is bound to be composed.

It is the fashion to speak of democracy as though it were a creative force, when in reality it is nothing more than a form of

government. And of all forms of government democracy is, perhaps, the noisiest and yet the weakest when it comes to executive action.

Let us assume, however, that the tone of the Peace Congress will be "democratic," but even so the atmosphere of a Peace Congress cannot be rarefied. It will be heavy and thick with political passion. The standards of human motive will not be high—certainly no higher than they were at Vienna in 1814, or at Berlin in 1876. Why should they? The ethics of national politics have not changed much since an Athenian aristocrat, finding himself outstripped in the race for power, turned to the common people for support, secured their suffrages, called his rule democracy, and kept himself in power for forty years. As for the ethics of international politics, they have been exemplified by the statesmen of the Central Powers in their acts, and denounced by the statesmen of the Allies in their declarations. They reached the lowest depths in August 1914.

If an angel of the Lord, a great writer has

said, were to strike the balance whether the world of the Antonines was more intelligent, more humane, more civilized, and more prosperous then or now, it is doubtful whether the decision would favour the present.

We may feel confident that, when this question of a League of Nations comes up for discussion at a Congress of Peace, the sharpest encounter will be between two divergent schools of ideas, both of them of German origin. On one side of the Council table the followers of Kant will urge in language that has not been surpassed in clearness, that the remedy for war is a Federal League of Nations, in which the weakest is as strong as the strongest, since it relies for protection on the united power of all, and the adjudication of their collective will. On the other side of the Council table will sit men who believe with Bernhardt that "war and brave spirit have done more great things than love of your neighbour."

We cannot evade the stern fact that the leaders of the Allies, and the allied peoples themselves, are not whole-heartedly on one

side or the other—that, although President Wilson is in ardent agreement with Kant, there are others, claiming to be leaders, who, in their secret hearts, hold to the view of Bernhardi.

The unequal development of the human race is a factor that cannot be overlooked. Great communities have been compared to great mountains, that have in them the primary, secondary, and tertiary strata of human progress. Still more aptly does this image fit a conference of European states, and yet it is difficult to imagine a conference or a League of Nations that is not based upon the principle of the political equality of the several states of which it is composed, if it is to fulfil the hopes of the idealist.

State equality was the fundamental idea of the framers of the American Constitution, when they allotted two representatives in their Senate to every state, irrespective of its size, population, or stage of development. It was the exact opposite of the principle that governed the formation of the German Confederation. One has stood the test of time; the other has not. If a League of

Nations is to stand the strain of national sentiment, we should assume the acceptance by Great Britain or Germany of representation in a League of Nations equal to that of Switzerland or Portugal. For the idealist is bound to hold that the future happiness of mankind depends upon the abandonment of the usual tests of territorial expansion, numbers of population, wealth, and even culture, when fixing the rights of national representation, since in his view the equality of nations is of far greater importance in the scale of human progress than the equality of man.

These reflections are not captious. They are an honest endeavour to point a specific moral that must be understood, if any serious attempt is to be made to frame a peace on the lines advocated by President Wilson. The leagued nations will have to become familiar with what the Greek historian called the co-existence of freedom and self-imposed restraint, before they can hope to preserve unshaken the fabric they desire to raise.

When, therefore, Mr. Lloyd George speaks

peace to the people, he should pray for divine inspiration, for no remembrance of former things will help him. He should pray for a Pauline conversion of the great peoples of the earth, for no scraps of paper will change the habits and traditions of ages. The decimation of the warlike races may help him to pacify Europe, as the wholesale slaughter of the barons in the Wars of the Roses helped Henry VII to pacify England. But just as in the fifteenth century many other causes were at work, that enabled the Tudor sovereigns gradually to impose a new authority on their unruly subjects, until the soul of England was changed, so parallel or subsidiary causes must be sought out and a stimulus given to their evolution, if Europe and the world are to be pacified when this war ends.

This is a war aim that will justify all the sacrifices Great Britain has made, and those yet to come. The words God, Patriotism, Progress, are often lightly used. Their implication varies according to the circumstances of those who use them. Their meanings are not to be found in a storm of

conflicting passions. If this war has been worth waging, and is worth fighting out to the last man, it is because on our side are ranged the hopes of those who desire to see their fellow-men of all races freed from old limitations, not of thought, but of action, and to transform social habits and remould political institutions, in tune with the dreams and aspirations of all that is best in England and America. To ensure such a victory over the reactionary spirit of Germany, or the forces of reaction nearer home, it is not necessary to destroy our national landmarks, as the Germans have destroyed Rheims, but it is necessary to avoid old pitfalls and all weak compromise either with our enemies or ourselves.

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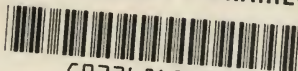
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